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## THE “PAULINE” EMANCIPATION FROM THE LAW A PRODUCT OF THE PRE-CHRISTIAN JEWISH DIASPORA.

THE view which I presented in my essay on “Judaism in the pre-Christian Greek World,” namely, that the Jewish Diaspora of that time was divided into two opposite religious camps—one law-abiding and national, the other addicted to philosophical analysis of the original text of Scripture and advocating unlimited universalism, has failed to receive the critics’ approval<sup>1</sup>.

One very weighty authority against this view need only be named. Schürer, in his notice of my essay, says: “Such a split of the Diaspora into two opposing parties is incapable of demonstration. Certainly there were many shades and degrees of thought. But the freest and most emancipated retained certain fundamental points of ceremonial Judaism, such as the Sabbath and the elementary regulations concerning diet and hygiene. If therefore the author postulates that both tendencies were merely transferred from Judaism to Christianity, his theory is vitiated at its source. The particular renunciation of the Law which Paul started is certainly not Jewish, and the influence of Hellenistic Judaism on Christianity in apostolic times, even in those of Paul, was very moderate. On the other hand, in the post-apostolical period it must have been of considerable importance.” Obviously Schürer and other eminent critics regarded my views as insufficiently supported and therefore unacceptable. I will therefore

<sup>1</sup> *Theolog. Literaturzeitung*, 1897, No. 12.

make another attempt to defend and strengthen my position.

As soon as the Jews began to take root on Greek soil and became acclimatized amidst Greek surroundings, they had to mould and modify their religion in order to make possible their continued existence among the Gentiles. The narrow national and religious limits marked out by the Mosaic Law had necessarily to be expanded ; and this perforce produced wide chasms and yawning gaps. That the Jews in the Diaspora soon found the national and religious cloak which they had brought away with them from their homeland too tight, and that they commenced to tear it to tatters, is demonstrated by the desperate attempts of their noblest leaders at already an early period to patch up the threadbare garment with new pieces of cloth, and refill the old bottles with new wine.

That the patches soon gave way and the old rents became wider, that the bottles burst and were utterly broken, one can learn from the history of the Diaspora, and the phenomenon is also most unmistakably repeated in Christianity soon after its birth.

In order, therefore, to adjust the Mosaic Law to the changed conditions of the dispersion, and to exhibit Judaism to the Gentiles as a system cognate with their sublimated philosophical conceptions, an act of gross self-deception was unconsciously perpetrated. The Mosaic Law received an allegorical interpretation at the hands of Jews who had quenched their thirst at the springs of Greek philosophy. Under their busy hands the whole of the Mosaic legislation was unconsciously transformed into a revealed divine philosophy. As Moses lived before the Greek sages, they must, it followed, have drawn their wisdom from him. This view was firmly held not merely by the pious allegorists of the dispersion, but also by Christianity's most eminent teachers in the first century.

That the allegorical interpretation of the Pentateuch had at an early period vogue amongst the Jews of the

dispersion, is abundantly proved in every line of Philo, even if there were no other traditions to the same effect. Philo exhibits a masterly skill in this method of exegesis, such as only a long course of development could have produced. He nowhere claims to be the first inventor of the method, but regards it as a divine inspiration, and repeatedly refers to predecessors and teachers. There were indeed many exegetists of this class. One need only name Aristobulus, Pseudo-Aristeas, Pseudo-Solomon, the first of whom had exhibited prodigious feats in the use of the allegorical method.

And who will venture to doubt that from the completion of the Septuagint up till Philo's time there must have flourished, besides those already mentioned, a large band—both teachers and disciples—of allegorists.

Philo's writings are by themselves sufficient to enforce this view. This method necessarily divided the community into those on the one hand who followed the letter of the Law, and those on the other who disregarded ceremonialism.

But it may be urged that a division, such as is here indicated, is purely an assumption incapable of proof. I venture to think otherwise. Eusebius, who, on this question, had access to numerous sources, explicitly tells us: “The Judaism of the (Diaspora) falls into two divisions *εἰς δύο τμήματα διήρηται*. The multitude scrupulously adhere to the Law. There are, however, also philosophical Jews who excel in virtue, have obtained a profounder insight into the spirit of the Law, and have learnt to look beneath the surface <sup>1</sup>.”

This is clear testimony as to the existence of two religious parties, one Conservative, the other Liberal. Philo

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* VIII, 10 Ἐξῆς ἂν εἴη καὶ τότε ἐπισημαίνεσθαι, ὡς τὸ πᾶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνος εἰς δύο τμήματα διήρηται, καὶ τὴν μὲν πληθὺν ταῖς τῶν νόμων κατὰ τὴν ῥητὴν διάνοιαν παρηγγελμέναις ὑποθήκαις ὑπῆγε· τὸ δὲ ἕτερον τῶν ἐν ἔξει τάγμα ταύτης μὲν ἡφίει θειοτέρα δέ τινα καὶ τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐπαναβεβηκυῖα φιλοσοφία προσέχειν ἡξίου θεωρεῖν τε τῶν ἐν νόμοις κατὰ διάνοιαν σημαινόμενων· Ἦν δὲ τοῦτο φιλοσόφων Ἰουδαίων γένος ὧν τὴν τοῦ βίου ἀσκησιν καὶ τῶν ἐξωθεν κατεπλάγησαν μυρίοι.

himself is a classical witness to the marked contrast between these parties, which was forced upon his notice to his great grief. He, in vigorous terms, blames the radical party which first explained ceremonial Judaism allegorically and then rejected it. The passage which illuminates the obscurity that envelops the development of this sect reads as follows: "God said to Abraham, 'I will make thy name great.' This I take to mean that as it is excellent to be honourable and good, so is it advantageous to have a reputation for goodness. Whoever is in possession of both benefits is truly happy. For a good name is not to be despised. Only the man who observes the national laws and customs and does not attempt innovations is worthy of this fortune. There are, however, unfortunately men who, regarding the written precepts as mere emblems of spiritual truths, carefully search for the latter while contemning the former. Such individuals I cannot but blame, for they should bear in mind the hidden meaning and at the same time observe the precepts in their literal sense. They, however, live for themselves alone, as if they dwelt in a solitude or had disembodied souls. They ignore the town, the village, the home; will hold no intercourse with others. Their ideal is to soar above the common herd and to apprehend the naked truth; whilst the scriptures exhort us to seek a good name and to alter nothing in our laws which have been framed by uniquely gifted and inspired men.

"For, although the Sabbatical institution embodies the sublime conception, that activity belongs to God alone. While to his creatures mere passive receptivity is left, we nevertheless ought not, on that account, to permit ourselves to violate the commandment to hallow the Sabbath day by kindling fire, tilling the soil, bearing burdens, prosecuting lawsuits, administering justice, seeking the recovery of pledges or debts, or engaging in any occupation permitted on the other days of the week. Although every feast is in truth but an emblem of spiritual joy and gratitude to God,

we should not therefore neglect the solemnities and customs associated with the feasts. Thus also, though the Abrahamic rite indicates the avoidance of voluptuousness and unchaste thoughts, we ought not therefore to neglect the observance of the precept. For if we resolved to retain these commandments only in their spiritual sense, we should consistently be compelled to give up the rites of self-sanctification in the temple and innumerable other necessary ceremonies. The literal sense of a precept is its body; the inner meaning, its soul. And as we take thought for the body as the mansion of the soul, so should we heed the commandments in their literal sense. Only thus can we hope to attain a clear comprehension of their true inwardness, apart from the fact that in this way alone shall we escape the censure of the multitude<sup>1</sup>.”

Thus far Philo. Has our Alexandrian Jew in these remarks been merely addressing himself to the outside world of Gentiles? When, with sad heart, he places his finger upon a gaping wound in the body politic, is his motive anxiety to prevent a disastrous schism among his people, or is it to be regarded as adulation of the Greeks? Philo’s wholesale censure upon an entire section of Jews was the cry of an anguished heart wrung from him by the peril of a complete split amongst the Jews of the dispersion. That these radical Jews, who fall under his censure, formed an influential class is indubitable. Else, why should Philo have thought it necessary to inaugurate an open, undisguised attack upon their system of life and thought, and expose the scandal of religious splits in the Jewish community to the gaze of the Greek heathen. Philo’s indictment rests on a solid and unchallenged foundation of truth. What is the inference to be drawn? Surely nothing more nor less than this: *That before the dawn of Christianity there already existed in the dispersion a Jewish party, or, rather, to be more precise, a Jewish sect which, on the*

<sup>1</sup> *De Migrat. Abr.* I, 450.

*ground of allegorical interpretation repudiated ceremonial law, rejected the rite of circumcision, Sabbaths and festivals, and other religious institutions; took their stand outside national Judaism, and incurred the severe censure not only of the masses of simple believers, but also of liberal and cultured men of Philo's stamp.*

How one can still maintain that there is no trace of a division of the Diaspora into two diametrically opposed sections passes my understanding. It is positively inconceivable how, in face of Philo's positive statement, an assertion of the following character can be made: "Certainly there were degrees of piety; but even the most heterodox observed the principal ceremonial institutions, such as the Sabbath and the elementary dietary and sanitary regulations." Surely the passage quoted above should convince us that if Philo severely censures a section whose system of exegesis meets with his entire approval, and of which he is so able an exponent, it can only be because the party pushed the system to an extreme, renounced all national and religious institutions, and so provoked a reaction of resentment even among those cultured Jewish circles who knew no better reason for their advocacy of the observance of forms than reverence for the illustrious dead who were their originators. This party which, last not least, is reproached with having severed its connexion with Judaism, must have been Antinomians and must gradually have arrived at its principles by an allegorical interpretation of the Mosaic Law. A distinctly organized body who consciously expounded Holy Writ on exclusively allegorical lines and aimed at eliciting the naked truth was the sect of Therapeutae. The characteristics with which Philo scathingly qualifies the radicals seems to fit the Therapeutae like a glove. The only discrepancy consists in the assumption that these sectaries were a source of irritation to their co-religionists. On the contrary they were looked upon as specially pious, because of their observance of certain

ancient religious rites, to which however the allegorical exegesis had given a foreign tinge.

Concerning the Therapeutae, Philo says: “They expounded the Mosaic Law allegorically, in the conviction that the words were merely emblems and symbols of mystical truths; they furthermore possessed writings of all those sages who were founders of their sect and as such had bequeathed to them several monuments of allegorical wisdom which served them as aids to devotion<sup>1</sup>.” And in another passage he says: “The allegorical interpretation of Holy Writ helped them to fathom its deeper import. The whole of the Mosaic legislation presented itself to their minds as a living organism, of which the literal meaning was the body, while the occult sense was the soul. Reason regards the words as a mirror which reflects with marvellous beauty and excellence an entire range of connected ideas, gradually elucidates the inward truths connoted by the symbols to those capable of comprehending them, and from apparently insignificant data lead to an apprehension of the invisible in the visible<sup>2</sup>.”

One may justly ask wherein lay the difference between the Radical party attacked by Philo and the Therapeutae. Why were the latter praised, the former blamed? Of the Radicals, it is said that they regard the Laws as symbolic of spiritual truths for which they search most scrupulously, soaring above the masses in order to arrive at the naked truth<sup>3</sup>. Did not the Therapeutae do the same? Almost the identical words are used to describe their efforts—to bring to light the real meaning of the written law<sup>4</sup>.

The Therapeutae are praised because they compare the Law to a living organism, whose body is the literal sense and whose soul is the underlying meaning<sup>5</sup>. But the

<sup>1</sup> Philo, *De Vita Contempl.*, II, 475 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483.

<sup>3</sup> Philo, *De Migrat. Abr.* I, 450 τὴν ἀλήθειαν γυμνὴν αὐτὴν ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς ἐρευνῶσι.

<sup>4</sup> *De Vita Contempl.*, II, 483 γυμνὰ εἰς τὸ φῶς προαγαγοῦσα τὰ ἐνθύμια.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* ἅπαντα γὰρ ἡ νομοθεσία δοκεῖ τοῖς ἀνδράσι τούτοις εἰκέναι ζῶν· καὶ



Radicals, whom he reproaches, also teach, says Philo, that "the word is the body, the occult sense is the soul<sup>1</sup>." Exactly the same figure is used which suggests that it has been borrowed from the Therapeutae. Why then are the Therapeutae eulogized and the Radicals severely censured? The answer may, without much difficulty, be obtained from Philo himself. Attention should be fixed on the development of the simile. Philo continues: "Just as we take care of the body—the soul's mansion—so should we respect the laws in their literal meaning. For only by observing the latter shall we rise to a clear comprehension of the spirit; and only thus moreover can we escape popular censure." One fact is quite clear. The Radicals did, the Therapeutae did not, openly exhibit their contempt for the Law. They met, after the old-fashioned manner, in Synagogue on Sabbaths, observed festivals, conformed outwardly to Judaism; although, under the influence of their philosophical interpretation, religious ceremonies had assumed a foreign and un-Jewish aspect, which last fact, however, would by no means have been admitted by the Jewish Hellenists themselves. They were sincerely convinced that Moses would not have desired his laws to be otherwise understood than in the sense of Jewish Alexandrianism. This Philo's works sufficiently prove. To the same category belongs the religious community named in the fourth Sibylline book, whose author was a Hellenistic Jew. That community survived to a later period when Christianity had already assumed form and consistency and continued for some time to co-exist side by side with it. It was undoubtedly Hellenistic; and, like the Essenes had, by the path of allegoristic exegesis, arrived at a contempt for the temple worship and

*σῶμα μὲν ἔχειν τὰς ῥητὰς διατάξεις ψυχὴν δὲ τὸν ἐναποκείμενον ταῖς λέξεσιν ἀόρατον νοῦν . . .*

<sup>1</sup> ἀλλὰ χρὴ ταῦτα μὲν σώματι νομίζειν οἰκέναι ψυχῇ δὲ ἐκεῖνα. ὥσπερ οὖν σώματος, ἐπεὶ ψυχῆς ἐστὶν οἶκος, προνοητέον οὕτω καὶ τῶν ῥητῶν νόμων ἐπιμελητέον.

sacrificial ritual, for which it substituted more spiritual exercises. The Sibyl characterizes as truly pious and happy individuals those who love the great God and praise him before every meal, while repudiating the efficacy of worship in the temple which is deaf and dumb, a pain and humiliation to mankind; who, furthermore, bathe in flowing waters as a penance and preach repentance.” These “pious Israelites” had already abjured national Judaism as well as the ceremonial law and renounced the temple service and its sacrificial cult as unworthy of the great God. In their gospel there was no room for the little word “law.” Towards their brethren as a nation these pious souls showed themselves cold<sup>1</sup>. This sect is no doubt identical with those mentioned by Celsus and Origen, and known to the former, while in the time of the latter Church-father they were already extinct. As Origen was personally unacquainted with them he attempts to account for Celsus’ Sibylline sect by the assumption that Celsus might have heard Christians blaming some of their co-religionists for regarding the Sibyl as a true prophetess, and that he therefore called them Sibyllists<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, Celsus’ report that Sibyllists existed at his time amongst the Christians is confirmed by a contemporary, the pastor Hermas, who was also the first Christian author to mention the Sibyl. Hermas relates the following vision: A youth of majestic figure appeared to him in a dream and asked him who he thought was the old woman who gave the book. “She is,” Hermas replied, “the Sibyl.” “Nay,” answered the apparition, “she is the Ecclesia.” To Hermas’ question why she is styled an old woman, the reply is vouchsafed because the Ecclesia was first in creation and the world exists for her sake

<sup>1</sup> Compare my work, *Das Judenth. in der vorchristl. jüd. Welt*, Wien, 1897, p. 56 ff.; Ewald, *Entsteh., Inhalt u. Wert der Sibyll. Bücher*, pp. 44 ff. and 51 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Orig., c. *Cels.*, V, 61 f. *ἔπε δέ (sc. ὁ Κέλσος) τινὰς εἶναι Σιβυλλιστὰς—τάχα παρακούσας τινῶν ἐγκαλούντων τοῖς οἰομένοις προφῆτην γεγονέναι Σίβυλλαν καὶ Σιβυλλιστὰς τοὺς τοιούτους καλεσάντων.*

alone<sup>1</sup>. This vision also indicates the mode in which, and the period when the Ecclesia supplanted the Sibyl, as well as the manner in which the Sibyllists were won for the Church. Christian tradition dating from the first centuries prove the existence of Jewish sects in the Diaspora before the birth of Christianity. Had one followed up these traces, instead of obliterating them, as was the practice started by the later fathers of the Church and still followed, a clearer view would have been obtained of the origin of Christianity and of the still obscure and unexplained function of sects within the Church.

Besides pre-Christian Jewish sects mentioned by Josephus and in the New Testament, Justin the Martyr and Hegesippus know others which undoubtedly belong to the Diaspora. Next to the Sadduceans, Pharisees, Baptists, and Galileans, he mentions Genists, Merists, and Hellenians. If we pay regard to these traditions and do not hastily conclude that the Genists, Merists, and Hellenians, Marbothians, &c., do not count—as far as the history of Christian heresy is concerned<sup>2</sup>—we should easily discover a relationship between the pre-Christian Jewish heretics and Christianity with its oldest sects.

Justin's tradition, which for our purpose is of the utmost importance, is as follows: "If," says Justin to Tryphon and his colleagues, "you have met with people who style themselves Christian, but have no claim to the title, seeing that they dare to blaspheme the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, deny the resurrection of the dead, contend that the soul goes direct to heaven, do not regard such as Christians; just as little as any one with sound judgment will allow that the Sadduceans and other heretics like the Genists, Merists, and Hellenians were Jews; the only

<sup>1</sup> Hermas, Vis. II, 4. 1 Ἀπεκαλύφθη δέ μοι, ἀδελφοί, κοιμωμένῳ ὑπὸ νεανίσκου εὐειδεστάτου λέγοντός μοι· Τὴν πρεσβυτέραν παρ' ἧς ἔλαβες τὸ βιβλίδιον τίνα δοκεῖς εἶναι; ἐγὼ φημι· Τὴν Σίβυλλαν. Πλανᾶσαι, φησίν, οὐκ ἔστιν. Τίς οὖν ἐστίν; φημί. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία, φησίν. εἶπον αὐτῷ· Διὰ τί οὖν πρεσβυτέρα; Ὅτι, φησίν, πάντων πρώτη ἐκτίσθη, καὶ διὰ ταύτην ὁ κόσμος κατηρτίσθη. Cf. Vis. II, 1. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Hilgenfeld, *Ketzergesch.*, p. 86.

feature these have in common with the body of their brethren is the name they bear and their descent from Abraham<sup>1</sup>.”

The Hellenistic company in which the Genists and Merists are included clearly points to heretics of the dispersion; and surely it is not without purpose that Justin places the antinomian Christian heretics, who deny the resurrection of the body and regard the soul alone as immortal, side by side with the Judæo-Hellenistic sects—the Genists, Merists, and Hellenians, they seem of the same class—with the sole difference that the latter are styled Jews, the former Christians. More exact traditions pointing to the pre-Christian origin of heresy we owe to Hegesippus, who introduces us to a sect omitted by Justin and called the Marbothians. He also thinks that all heresy is traceable to pre-Christian Judaism, which opposed it as much as Christianity afterwards did<sup>2</sup>. Jewish heresies led by a gradual transition to Christian heresies; and the arch-heretic Simon Magus constituted the link between them<sup>3</sup>. A marked silence concerning the sects into which the Jewish Diaspora split is observable at the beginning of the third century. Hand in hand with this studied reticence an effort is apparent to attribute all heresy to Christianity itself.

Thus the first arch-heretic mentioned is Simon Magus, who enacted his rôle during the infancy of Christianity, which he tried to counteract by heterodoxies. After Simon, *Magister et Progenitor omnium hereticorum*—as Irenæus calls him—all bridges leading to the Diaspora were destroyed.

Heresy, as till to-day has been generally admitted,

<sup>1</sup> Justin, *Dial. c. Tr.*, cap. 80 ὥσπερ οὐδὲ Ἰουδαίους, ἂν τις ὁρθῶς ἐξετάσῃ, ὁμολογήσειεν εἶναι τοὺς Σαδδουκαίους· ἥ τὰς ὁμοίας αἵρέσεις Γενιστῶν καὶ Μεριστῶν . . . . καὶ Ἑλληνανῶν . . . .

<sup>2</sup> Euseb., *Eccl. Hist.*, IV, 22. 7 Ἦσαν δὲ γυνῶμαι διάφοροι ἐν υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ, τῶν κατὰ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰοῦδα καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ αὐται, κ.τ.λ.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., IV, 22. 5 ἀφ’ ὧν Σίμων, ὅθεν οἱ Σιμωνιανοί, καὶ Κλεόβιος, κ.τ.λ.

developed a marked activity in the early Christian community. "In its very cradle," Hilgenfeld rightly says, "a pair of serpents coiled round Christianity—the ethnical and the Judaizing heresies; from infancy orthodoxy had to battle against the monster heresy<sup>1</sup>." Little curiosity has been expressed as to the origin of this monster, which is, on its first appearance, already armed with pronounced gnostic doctrines—surely not a product of the new creed. One is content with the hasty assertion that pre-Christian gnosticism was exceedingly primitive, a statement the *naïveté* of which is obvious when one thinks of the high standard attained by the Alexandrian gnosis in the time of Jesus.

Such assertions are the necessary outcome of a reluctance to acknowledge the influence exercised by the Jewish Diaspora directly and immediately upon the development of its daughter-faith. For, after all, the first Christian community sprang from the Synagogue of the Dispersion, which counted among its adherents the Libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and the Cilicians—Asiatics among whom Stephen developed, though at first cautiously, those antinomian teachings which found a sympathetic hearing with many, but were condemned by others as blasphemies against Moses and God<sup>2</sup>.

Here, then, we have two parties, the Conservative and Radical. According to the Apostle Paul's opinion, as given in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, heresy was, from the first, an inevitable element in Christianity. The following remarkable words are put into the apostle's mouth: "When you come together, I hear, there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it, for there must be also heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. xi. 18, 19)<sup>3</sup>. Here, then, is an authorita-

<sup>1</sup> *Ketzergesch.*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vi. 9 sq.

<sup>3</sup> *συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἀκούω σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν, καὶ μέρος τι πιστεύω, δεῖ γὰρ καὶ αἵρέσεις ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι, ἵνα οἱ δόκιμοι φανεροὶ γένωνται ἐν ὑμῖν.*

tive pronouncement concerning the existence of heresy in the early Church, and its necessity in order that orthodoxy should be clearly distinguished from it.

In opposition to this view, Hegesippus—who, as before mentioned, regarded Christian heresy as a continuation of Jewish heresy—pretends that, till Trajan’s time, Christianity, where it was still untainted by futile controversies, enjoyed uninterrupted peace, and that during the lifetime of the apostles, heresy, if it at all existed, had not yet dared to raise its head. Only after their death had the reptile crept forth from its dim obscurity.

“The Church,” so Eusebius reports Hegesippus<sup>1</sup>, “was, up to this time, an undefiled virgin; they that sought to falsify the pure teaching of the Gospel, if indeed there were such, still kept in the background. But after the holy apostolic choir had been hushed, and the generation that had heard the divine wisdom had died out, there began the conspiracy of a God-forsaken heresy fomented by false teachers. When the apostles were no longer living, heresy was brazen-fronted enough to dare to pit the Gnosis—incorrectly so styled—against the Gospel of truth.”

This account embodies much truth and affords us a glimpse into the controversies which produced Christianity. It must, in the first place, be borne in mind that Hegesippus speaks not merely of heretics but also of heterodox gnosticism, which had raised its head after the Apostles’ death. The false gnosis was thus, already in the Apostles’ time, perniciously active, and it was only their strenuous opposition which violently thrust it back into the darkness, from which it again impetuously burst

<sup>1</sup> *Ecd. Hist.*, III, 32. 7, 8 ὡς ἄρα μέχρι τῶν τότε χρόνων παρθένος καθαρὰ καὶ ἀδιάφθορος ἔμεινεν ἡ ἐκκλησία, ἐν ἀδήλῳ που σκότει φωλευόντων εἰσέτι τότε τῶν, εἰ καὶ τινες ὑπῆρχον, παραφθείρειν ἐπιχειρούντων τὸν ὑγιῆ κανόνα τοῦ σωτηρίου κηρύγματος. ὡς δὲ ὁ ἱερὸς τῶν ἀποστόλων χορὸς διάφορον εἴληφε τοῦ βίου τέλος . . . . . τηνικαῦτα τῆς ἀθέου πλάνης ἀρχὴν ἐλάμβανεν ἡ σύστασις διὰ τῆς τῶν ἑτεροδιδασκάλων ἀπάτης, οἱ καί, ἅτε μηδενὸς ἔτι τῶν ἀποστόλων λειπομέννου, γυμνῇ λοιπὸν ἦδη τῇ κεφαλῇ τῷ τῆς ἀληθείας κηρύγματι τὴν ψευδάνυμον γινῶσιν ἀντικηρύττειν ἐπεχείρουν.

forth after their decease. But it had been in existence from the beginning. Gnostic teachings clearly did not spring up in a night, but had passed through a long course of evolution. What, however, was the origin of this gnosticism, which notwithstanding the Apostles' antagonism, exercised a mighty influence upon the formation of the new creed? Hegesippus furnishes a reply. It came from pre-Christian Judaism; and, one may add, from the Judaism of the dispersion, which before the advent of Christianity already possessed a fully developed gnosis based on allegory; and this was afterwards transferred into the Christian Church<sup>1</sup>.

Of immense value also is Origen's remark<sup>2</sup> concerning the schisms in the early Christian community. "At first," he says, "the believers cherished a diversity of views concerning the meaning of the Holy Scriptures; and this was the case at the time when the Apostles preached and men who with their own eyes had seen Jesus proclaimed his teaching."

In the epistles of St. Paul, who lived in the days of eyewitnesses of Jesus, there are passages which indicate that some doubted the resurrection and asked whether it had already taken place. And the same apostle's admonition, "Beware of profane debates and of the disputes of a spurious gnosis," shows that at the period when, according to Celsus, the number of believers was but small, there were some who misconstrued religious doctrines.

At the dawn of the third century gnosticism had made so many conquests on Christian soil, the adherents of "the spurious gnosis" had grown so numerous and invested with so much authority, that they posed as masters of the situation and played the rôle of teachers of true Christianity, which they shook to its very foundations. Then commenced a severe struggle, in the course of which the

<sup>1</sup> Compare my essay, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Christenthums*, Wien, 1894, p. 8 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Celsum*, III, 11.

memory of the pre-Christian heretics of the Jewish Diaspora was thrust into oblivion—an oblivion encouraged by the parties interested, who were thus enabled to represent all heresy as an offshoot of Christianity. This attitude was also forced upon them by learned heathen antagonists like Celsus, who reproached the Christians with being split up into so many sects that their religion itself was hidden from view, or appeared nothing else than one of the innumerable heresies which had grown up contemporaneously or at an earlier period.

It was therefore the Church's business to prove that it was the mother of all heresies—new or old—which could by any stretch be brought into relation with itself.

Christianity was the source, and all schisms were the impure rivulets flowing from it. Tertullian strikingly proves the success of this method in repelling the attacks of heathens and heretics. “Surely it is unnatural,” he says, “to suppose that the true doctrine was an innovation preceded by heresy, for did not the true creed foretell the advent of heretics?” The tares clearly sprang up after the good ears<sup>1</sup>. Under these circumstances it is conceivable that pre-Christian Jewish sects which stood as sponsors at the cradle of Christianity, though they had till the end of the first century remained purely Jewish sects which had made no concessions to the new faith, were nevertheless stamped as Christian heresies by a Church engaged in a vital struggle with external and internal foes<sup>2</sup>.

And even to-day, when the traces that guide one's footsteps from Christian gnosticism to its pre-Christian Jewish predecessor have become almost obliterated, we can,

<sup>1</sup> Tertull., *De Praescr. Haer.*, 29 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, often mentioned in Josephus and the New Testament, form an exception; they stood quite outside the pale of Christianity. Concerning the relation of the Essenes to that creed, the reader is referred to my work, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Christenthums*, 98-142.



amongst the innumerable Christian heresies reported by the Church, distinguish those which sprang from Jewish Alexandrianism. These heretics reveal themselves as the children of the antinomian radicals of the Jewish Diaspora, upon whom Philo passes such severe strictures. We need only describe the Ophites, Cainites, Sethites, and Melchizedekites. The earliest history of heretics already mentions the first three sects as belonging to the same category. The common character of their teaching can be inferred from the fact that the Ophites were often confounded with the Sethites—some even maintaining that the Ophites were called Sethites<sup>1</sup>.

These sects were eminently antinomian. This is proved not only from the position which they traditionally assumed towards the Mosaic Law and from the Old Testament figures selected by them as representatives of their "spiritual Dynamis," but also from express testimony to the same effect<sup>2</sup>.

The earliest accounts of the Ophites<sup>3</sup> can, as regards essentials, be easily compressed into the statement that this sect worshipped the serpent which secured for mankind the gift of knowledge of good and evil. Moses showed his reverence for its power by making a brazen serpent. As it opened up to man the perception of the true and august God, the serpent is a divine force worthy of adoration<sup>4</sup>, an incarnation of the divine Sophia<sup>5</sup>.

Here we have the Alexandrian doctrine of the Dynamis. The serpent is Sophia incarnate. The Jewish Alexandrian School, as we read in Philo, and its predecessors regarded

<sup>1</sup> Theodoret, I, 14 *Σηθιανοί, οὓς ὀφιδανὸς ἢ ὀφίτας ὀνομάζουσιν* . . .

<sup>2</sup> Blasphemant legem et deum legis auctorem, is said of the Cainites in Augustine, *Haer.*, XVIII.

<sup>3</sup> Iren., *Haer.* I, 30; Pseudo-Tertull., c. 6; Philaster, 1; Epiphani., XXXVI.

<sup>4</sup> Philaster, *Haer.*, 1 et velut aliquam dei virtutem esse eundem aestimant, atque eum adnuntiant adorandum.

<sup>5</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.*, XXX. 15 Quidam enim ipsam Sophiam serpentem factam dicunt.

the Sophia as the power which preceded the world and created it. This idea was founded upon the much-discussed passage in Proverbs, in which Wisdom declares, "God created me, the first of all his works, and before the ages he formed me<sup>1</sup>." The Cainites<sup>2</sup> adored the divine Dynamis in Cain. This force, manifested in him in great strength<sup>3</sup>, overpowered the weaker Dynamis in Abel, whom it destroyed<sup>4</sup>. The Cainites permitted and indulged in all sensual excesses, teaching that none can attain to bliss who had not indulged the bodily appetites to the full. All should endeavour to choose a Dynamis stronger than that weak one that created the world. The Cainites blasphemed the Law and God its author, and denied the resurrection of the body<sup>5</sup>.

Could this sect have sprung from Christianity? What is there Christian about it except perhaps its later gnostic additions absorbed under the influence of the Christian gnosis? All else points to the Alexandrian school, of which it represents the extreme left section. Moreover we find this sect clearly sketched by Philo. Cain he conceived as the incarnation of foolish arrogance and self-conceit, which claims everything as its own. The very name Cain, meaning possession, describes the character<sup>6</sup>. There are, says Philo in another passage, two opposing views, the one ascribing everything to individual mind, guide of all thought, feeling and desires, the other leaves everything to God. The one is represented by Cain, the other by Abel<sup>7</sup>. Cain's challenge was only intended to provoke

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Friedländer, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Christenthums*, pp. 8-36.

<sup>2</sup> Iren., *Haer.*, I, 31. 2; Pseudo-Tert., 7; Philaster, 2; Epiphani., XXXVII; Theodor., I, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, c. 18 Cainani propterea sic appellati, quoniam Cain honorant, dicentes eum fortissimae esse virtutis.

<sup>4</sup> Philaster, 2 et virtutem maiorem, quae erat in ipso Cain, invaluisse ut suum interficeret fratrem.

<sup>5</sup> Augustine, 18 Blasphemant legem, et deum legis auctorem, carnisque resurrectionem negant.

<sup>6</sup> Philo, *De Cherub.*, I, 150 f.

<sup>7</sup> *De Sacrif.*, I, 163.

his brother Abel to a discussion and to vanquish him by sophistries that had the appearance of truth, and when, at the present time, Philo continues, the egoists discuss with the moralists, they do not stop until they have subdued and wholly destroyed them. The evolution of their principles runs on the following lines: Is not the body the habitation of the soul? Must we not therefore take exceeding care of this habitation? Are not the eyes, the ears, and other senses the constant companions and friends of the soul, and, as such, do they not deserve due honour?

*Has nature created sensuality, delights, and all the pleasures of life for the dead and yet unborn, or rather for the living?* Why shall we not strive for riches, honours, power, and other similar advantages which secure a safe and happy life? *Proofs of the justice of these sentiments are the lives*<sup>1</sup> of these so-called moralists, who are nearly all obscure, despised, wretched, and in indigent circumstances. With such sophistries they seem to have vanquished those unaccustomed to casuistry. But Abel, whose spirit was all goodness, and who had not attained to the specious arts of the rhetorician, ought to have refused Cain's challenges<sup>2</sup>. More important still for our purpose is the following passage. Philo says: What is the view of the ungodly? It is that *the human intellect is the measure of everything*; a theory said to have been promulgated by an old sophist Protagoras, an expounder and champion of Cain's perversities<sup>3</sup>. How could you (philosophers) dare to pronounce or to listen to sublime phrases concerning holiness and divine worship when you attributed<sup>4</sup> all good and evil entirely or partially to mortals? And if anybody charges you with impiety, you boldly defend yourselves with the statement *that you have been educated in it by the excellent example and precept of Cain*, who

<sup>1</sup> μάργυς δὲ ὁ βίος τούτων.

<sup>2</sup> Philo, *Quod det. pot. insid. solet*, I, 191, 197 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *De Posterit.*, 232 τῆς Κάιν ἀπονοίας ἐκγονον.

<sup>4</sup> εἰ δὲ ἔχετε παρ' αὐτοῖς τὸν ἀντίθεον νοῦν.

taught men to honour the nearer rather than the remoter cause? Apart from all reasons it is right to follow him, as he irrefutably demonstrated the force of his teaching by vanquishing Abel, the champion of the opposite view<sup>1</sup>.

Most striking of all is the following allegory, which shows that Philo not only knew but combated the anti-nomian sect of the Cainites. This remarkable passage reads as follows: *As every town consists of houses and inhabitants, so Cain regarded his proofs as structures, from which he repulses the attack of his adversaries, devising fictions instead of truth. The inhabitants are accomplices in the crime of godlessness, self-love, arrogance, and falsehood; they imagine themselves wise without knowing true wisdom, they heap up foolishness, stupidity, ignorance, and other kindred plagues. Their laws are lawlessness, injustice, unfairness, licentiousness, impudence, audacity, lustful intemperance, and indulgence in innumerable unnatural desires. Such impious men form, in their depravity, communities, until God, incensed at their sophistries, suddenly and violently overthrows them, even though they have built not only a town, but also a town with a tower reaching up to heaven*<sup>2</sup>. Here

<sup>1</sup> *De Posterit.*, I, 232 *κάν ἄρα τις γραφὴν ἀσεβείας ἐπενέγκη καθ' ὑμῶν, ἀπολογούμενοι θαρρεῖτε, φάσκοντες παρ' ὑφηγητῇ καὶ διδασκάλῳ πάνυ καλῶς πεπαιδευῆσθαι Κάιν, ὃς τὸ πλησίον πρὸ τοῦ μακρὰν αἰτίου παρήνει τιμᾶν, ᾧ διὰ τε ἄλλα προσεκτέον καὶ μάλισθ' ὅτι σαφέσιν ἔργοις τὴν τοῦ δόγματος ἰσχὺν ἐπεδείξατο, νικήσας τὴν τῆς ἐναντίας δόξης εἰσηγητὴν Ἀβελ, καὶ αὐτοῦ τὴν δόξαν ἐκποδῶν ἀνελών.*

<sup>2</sup> *De Posterit.*, I, 225 *Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν πᾶσα πόλις ἐξ οἰκοδομημάτων καὶ . . . συνέστηκε· τὰ μὲν οἰκοδομήματά ἐστιν αὐτῷ λόγοι οἱ ἀποδεικνύντες· οἷς, καθάπερ ἀπὸ τείχους, πρὸς τὰς τῶν ἐναντίων ἀπομάχεται προσβολὰς πιθανὰς εὐρέσεις κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας μυθοπλαστῶν. οἰκήτορες δὲ οἱ ἀσεβείας, ἀθεύτητος, φιλαυτίας, μεγαλαυχίας, ψεύδους, δόξης ἑταῖροι, δοκησίσοφοι, τὸ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν σοφὸν οὐκ εἰδότες, ἀγνοιοὶ καὶ ἀπαιδευοὶ καὶ ἀμαθιοὶ καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἀδελφὰς καὶ συγγενεῖς κήρας συγκεκριοτακότες. νόμοι δὲ ἀνομίαί, ἀδικαίαι, τὸ ἀνίσον, τὸ ἀκόλαστον, θρασυτής, ἀπόνοια, αὐθάδεια, ἡδονῶν ἀμετρίαί, τῶν περὶ φύσεως ἄλεκτοι ἐπιθυμίαί. Τοιαύτης πόλεως ἕκαστος τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ τῇ παναθλίᾳ ψυχῇ δημιουργὸς εὕρεσκειται. μέχρις ἂν ὁ θεὸς βουλευθεὶς ταῖς σοφιστικαῖς αὐτῶν τέχναϊς ἀθρόαν καὶ μεγάλην ἐργάσῃται σύγχυσιν. Τοῦτο δ' ἔσται, ὅταν μὴ μόνον πόλιν καὶ πύργον οἰκοδομῶσιν, οὐδ' ἡ κεφαλὴ εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀφίξεται . . .*

we find then a sect described as the philosophizing sect, who chose the self-worshipping Cain as the guide of their lives, their teacher and master, a sect which, in accordance with the sophist Protagoras' axiom, "The human intellect is the measure of all things," revered in Cain the supreme force. The theories of this party are based on a web of sophistry. Instead of law they proclaimed lawlessness. Orthodoxy personified in Abel was combated and defeated by the superiority of the higher Dynamis incorporated in Cain. The body, the mortal frame of the soul, is not only permitted but also enjoined to taste sensual pleasures. This is precisely Cainitism, as depicted in the earliest heresiology.

This sect, as we read in Philo, was particularly dangerous on account of the rhetorical skill possessed by its representatives, and seemed to have produced a mental ferment of an extensive and perilous character. For Philo warns all virtuous people unskilled in sophistry not to enter into disputations with them. Only those should oppose them who have mastered every device in the art of controversy. Then the pious would no longer be vanquished by their weakness in dialectics, but would easily avoid the sophist's traps. Properly grappled these sectaries would prove unsubstantial opponents. Successful in detached argument, earnest and organized controversy would discomfit them<sup>1</sup>.

Next we come to the Sethites<sup>2</sup>. These are reported to have shared the chief errors of the Ophites and the Cainites. According to them, everything was created by the angels and not by the Higher Dynamis. The Superior Power which they term Mother became all-powerful, and after Abel's death gave life to Seth and bestowed upon him that heavenly spark by which the force of the creative angels was shattered<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *De Posterit.*, I, 225.

<sup>2</sup> Philaster, 3; Epiphan., *Haer.*, XXXIX; Pseudo-Tert., c. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Philaster, 3 *Quod providens, inquit, mater, quia occisus est Abel*

The Sethites call Seth the Messiah<sup>1</sup>. The three sects here named, the Ophites, Cainites, and Sethites, undoubtedly belong to the pre-Christian Jewish Diaspora; their disciples were recruited from the Radicals. Just as the Synagogue generally everywhere counted among its adherents numerous sympathizers among Greek heathendom, so the Radical section was also joined by philosophizing heathens whom Philo dubs “the echoes of Cain’s perverse theories.” If an investigation had been instituted—as strangely enough has not yet been done—into the measure of influence which these proselytes—many of them adherents from the various philosophical schools—exercised upon the religious evolution of Judaism in the Diaspora, quite different views would have been accepted as to the origin and development of Christianity.

The paths trodden by Judaism in the Greek world, which have not yet been sufficiently explored, would become clear. The supreme importance of Christianity—the ripest fruit of this evolution—would remain undiminished. Even the Talmud, notwithstanding its dark presentiments, lauded as an ideal of the future the union between the Jephetic and Semitic spirits. Unhealthy symptoms undoubtedly preceded and succeeded the birth of a child, whose parents, notwithstanding the diversity of their characters, external circumstances had forced into an unnatural union; but it must be remembered that both father and mother were of originally healthy stock. The innumerable Jewish sects, from whose midst Christianity stepped to the front and by which it was accompanied like a shadow on its world-conquering path, afford evidence of the vigour of religion in the Jewish Diaspora. The principal excrescences were the sects of the Ophites, Cainites, and Sethites.

*iustus, cogitavit ut pareret iustum Seth in quem et collocavit magnae virtutis spiritum, ut possint destrui virtutes inimicae.*

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., Quidam autem ex eis non solum genus de eo deducere, sed etiam ipsum Christum esse asserunt atque opinantur.

Of the Melchizedekians I will speak later on. Even these spirits of infidelity, who consistently pursued evil, nevertheless worked unconsciously for good by the prominence into which they forced Judaism and Christianity, whose orthodox followers repelled those sects. They were repudiated by Philo and also by Christianity as soon as it had become conscious of its mission.

Philaster enumerates the Ophites, Cainites, and Sethites among the sects flourishing among the Jews before the advent of Jesus. Origen repeatedly and emphatically protests against the notion that the Ophites, Cainites, and similar sects belonged to Christianity. Thus he says: "Celsus may possibly have heard of some sects which do not even share the knowledge of Jesus with us. He may have heard of the so-called Ophites, Cainites, and other sects who entirely renounced Christ. But this does not justify him in the reproach which he levels against Christianity<sup>1</sup>." In another place he replies to Celsus' stricture: "That the Christians imprecated the Creator for cursing the serpent which brought the knowledge of good and evil to our first parents. Celsus ought to have known," he says, "that the Ophites, so-called on account of their adoration of the serpent for its good counsel to the first authors of the human race, by which they overcame the Titans and giants of the fable, are so little in sympathy with Christianity that they hurl against Jesus the same abominable charges as Celsus himself does, and refuse to admit any one to their society who has not first pronounced imprecations against the Saviour. It should be noted that Celsus puts his case in his polemic against Christianity so clumsily that he even recognizes as Christians those who would not hear the name of Jesus and denied that he was a virtuous man. Can any one be conceived more perverse than these Ophites, to whom the serpent was the source and instrument of all goodness, unless it be Celsus himself, who says that the charges

<sup>1</sup> Orig., c. *Cels.*, III, c. 13.

against the Ophites were also justified against the Christians? The Greek philosopher who lived in poverty, and who sought to prove by his personal example that happiness is possible without wealth, styled himself a cynic. But these godless people act as though they were not human beings, to whom the serpent is an enemy, but rather serpents themselves. They glory in tracing their name Ophite to the reptile which is dreaded and loathed as the deadliest foe of the human race<sup>1</sup>.”

The above three sects are not therefore in any way the offspring of Christianity. This, even apart from Philaster’s and Origen’s evidence, is, in our opinion, beyond question. The circumstances that they sought their *Dynamis* in the Old and not in the New Testament sufficiently indicates their Jewish origin. They are undoubtedly children of the Diaspora, and, to speak more definitely, they formed the extreme left wing of the allegorical school of Alexandria. They stood in sharp opposition to the Conservatives of this school. Here, heterodox Cain ; there, orthodox Abel ! The allegorizing Conservatives wished the Law to be scrupulously observed, although it had been disintegrated by their peculiar system of hermeneutics. They were actuated by reverence for the lofty-minded teachers who had created it. They also had regard to the sentiments of the large multitude of believers in literal inspiration. The Radicals, on the other hand, had thrown the Law completely overboard. For in their estimation it was already a thing of shreds and tatters. In the work of destruction they proceeded methodically, employing weapons with which the Law itself had furnished them. Their conception of the divine *Dynamis*—the instrument used by them for the process of disintegration—they borrowed from the Old Testament. From the same source was derived the idea of the serpent which endowed man with the gnosis, as well as the biblical figures of Cain and Abel, to whom the Law was yet unknown. They continued to cling to

<sup>1</sup> Orig., c. *Cels.*, VI, c. 28.



their scriptural ideas even after they had joined the ranks of Christianity—a further proof that that religion had not given them birth. Let us now consider the Melchizedekians, who, I am firmly convinced, were also a pre-Christian sect of the Jewish Diaspora, and the Sethites, with whom by all accounts the former were closely connected.

The Melchizedekians, as they are termed in patristic literature<sup>1</sup>, regarded the Melchizedek of the Bible as a mighty force (*μεγάλην δύναμιν*); they place him upon an inaccessible pinnacle of greatness, contending that he is not only a Dynamis, but even higher than the Messiah. "He was without father, without mother, without descent, the real mediator between God and man, through whose intercession alone forgiveness can be obtained from God<sup>2</sup>." He was a Prince of justice and therefore was raised by the Almighty to the condition of a spirit and Son of God. This is essentially the creed of the Melchizedekians.

We may now ask, how did the assumption arise that this sect was the offspring of Christianity. Nothing indicates a Christian origin, while everything points to the Old Testament as expounded by the Alexandrian school of Exegesis as the source of inspiration. Just as the Ophites looked upon Ophis as the first teacher of the gnosis, while the Cainites regarded Cain and the Sethites Seth in the same light, so the Melchizedekians adored the mystical Melchizedek as the representative of their Dynamis. The object in all cases was to break down the trammels of the Law which retarded and hindered the spread of Judaism in the Diaspora. Their great Dynamis, Melchizedek, did not recognize circumcision or the obligatory character of any other rite. Why, therefore, should his reverers be bound by the external

<sup>1</sup> Epiphanius, *Haer.*, LV, c. 1-9; Pseudo-Tert., c. XLVIII; Theodor., II, 6; Augustine, 34; Philaster, 52 and 148.

<sup>2</sup> Epiphanius, c. 8 *ὅτι ἄρχων ἐστὶ δικαιοσύνης*. Ibid. *ἐπ' αὐτῷ τούτῳ κατασταθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν οὐρανῷ πνευματικός τις ὦν καὶ υἱὸς θεοῦ τεταγμένος*.

Law, especially as they were fully penetrated by its spirit.

When, accordingly, the time arrived for the Melchizedekians to come to an understanding with Christianity, whose conception of the Law was entirely to their own taste, they made certain concessions, without, however, in the least giving up their own peculiar notion of the great Dynamis. Melchizedek continued to be the great Dynamis *par excellence*. Jesus was subordinated to him<sup>1</sup>. As the Sethites had asserted that the founder of Christianity was not naturally but miraculously a child of Seth, or Seth himself sent down on earth for the second time, so the Melchizedekians, by their firm adhesion to their own doctrine, sought to bridge the gulf between it and the new creed. Jesus, they said, had certainly been entrusted with a mission, but only “after the order of Melchizedek,” to whom he is subordinate and upon whom he is entirely dependent. The Old Testament furnished them proofs for this theory, for the Psalmist explicitly said of the Messiah, “Thou art a priest of the order of Melchizedek”—which clearly shows Jesus’ inferiority to the ancient King of Salem. Jesus, accordingly, was appointed in the order of Melchizedek and charged with the mission of guiding mankind out of their manifold errors and leading them to the only right path, that of the gnosis, marked out by Melchizedek<sup>2</sup>.

Of some importance for our inquiry is the Melchize-

<sup>1</sup> Epiphanius, XXXIX, 4 ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Σηθ κατὰ σπέρμα καὶ κατὰ διαδοχὴν γένους ὁ Χριστὸς ἦλθεν, αὐτὸς Ἰησοῦς οὐχὶ κατὰ γέννη ἀλλὰ θανμαστῶς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ πεφηνώς, ὥς ἐστὶν αὐτὸς ὁ Σηθ ὁ τότε, καὶ Χριστὸς νῦν ἐπιφοιτήσας τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπὸ τῆς μητρὸς ἄνωθεν ἀπεσταλμένος. Cf. Philaster, *Haer.*, 3 De Seth autem ipso Christum dominum genus deducere aiunt. Quidam autem ex eis non solum genus de eo deducere, sed etiam ipsum Christum esse asserunt atque opinantur.

<sup>2</sup> Epiphanius, LV, c. 8 καὶ δεῖ ἡμᾶς αὐτῷ (sc. Μελχισεδέκ) προσφέρειν φασίν, ἵνα δι’ αὐτοῦ προσερχθῇ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ εὐρωμεν δι’ αὐτοῦ ζωὴν. Καὶ Χριστὸς μὲν φασὶν ἐξελέγη ἵνα ἡμᾶς καλέσῃ ἐκ πολλῶν ὁδῶν εἰς μίαν ταύτην γνώσιν, ὑπὸ θεοῦ κεχρισμένος καὶ ἐκλεκτὸς γενόμενος ἐπειδὴ ἐπέστρεψεν ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ εἰδώλων καὶ ἐπέδειξεν ἡμῖν τὴν ὁδόν.

dekians' traditional conception of Jesus' mission after the order of Melchizedek. It runs in the ecclesiastical chronicler's report as follows: "Jesus is inferior to Melchizedek, because of the former it is said, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.' Whilst Jesus is mediator for mankind only, Melchizedek, being a higher and divine Dynamis, intercedes also for the angels and heavenly hosts. He is superior to Jesus, 'being without father, without mother, without descent, without beginning or end'¹." This conception of Melchizedek explains the text—otherwise scarcely intelligible—in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ii. 16: "For verily he (Jesus) took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham."

But before we consider the Epistle to the Hebrews, which exhibits the cult of Melchizedek in the period of its ripest fruition, and clearly demonstrates how this scriptural hero had, in early times, already become transformed into a dark mystical figure², let us search the literature of the Alexandrian school for traces of this cult, and thus support our view that, like Ophitianism, Cainism, Sethianism, this cult too was a child of the pre-Christian Jewish Diaspora. We find, in fact, that Philo not only deified Melchizedek, but actually identified him with the Logos. The passage is so important that we venture to transcribe it *in extenso*: "If any one inquires concerning the origin of the universe, we are justified in replying that it was due to the mercy, lovingkindness, and grace, exhibited by God to the human race. Everything in this world and the world itself are gifts, favours, boons from God. Thus God appointed

¹ Pseudo-Tert., XLVIII sed hunc (sc. Iesum) inferiorem esse quam Melchisedech, eo quod dictum sit de Christo: Tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedech. Nam illum Melchisedech praecipuae gratiae caelestem esse virtutem, eo quod agat Christus pro hominibus deprecator et advocatus ipsorum factus; Melchisedech facere pro caelestibus angelis atque virtutibus. Nam esse illum usque adeo Christo meliorem, ut ἀπάρων sit, ἀμήρων sit, ἀγενεαλόγητος sit, cuius neque initium neque finis comprehensus sit aut comprehendi possit.

² Heb. v. 11.

Melchizedek King of Salem, i. e. King of Peace, to be his own priest. This king's virtues are not named, because without preceding merits he was appointed a Prince of Peace and deemed worthy of the priesthood. He is styled king in contrast to the term tyrant; for a king rules according to law, a tyrant according to his arbitrary will. The tyrannical spirit imposes upon body and soul violent and unjust orders which bring pain and sorrow and encourage sensuality. The king does not command, but convinces. His orders guide the soul to virtue as a ship is wafted by a favourable breeze into a haven of safety. *This king is the true Logos.* The tyrant may be called Prince of War; the king—Prince of Peace—Salem. He ought to provide for the soul this ambrosia of delight and gladness, for of Melchizedek it is said, He offered wine and bread—gifts denied by the inhospitable Ammonites and Moabites, who were therefore excluded from the congregation of the Lord. The Ammonites (children of sensuality) and the Moabites (children of intellect) are types of those who strive to explain all things by the senses or the intellect, and account God as nought. Of them Moses therefore said, they shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, because they did not present bread and water when we came out of Egypt. Melchizedek, however, might offer wine instead of water to quench the thirst of the Lord, strengthen it and elevate it to that state of divine exaltation which passeth all understanding. For he is the priest—Logos—whose inheritance is the Lord. And of the Lord he cherishes sublime and exalted conceptions, therefore is he called priest of the most high God, not as if there could be another and less high God, for God is one in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, and there is none beside him, but because, to think of God is an exceedingly lofty and exalted occupation. Hence Melchizedek is styled priest of the most high God<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Philo, *Leg. Alleg.*, I, 102 . . . . . *ιερεὺς γάρ ἐστι λόγος, κληρον ἔχων τὸν ὄντα καὶ ὑψηλῶς περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὑπερόγκως καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶς λογιζόμενος.*

We thus find that the same mystery had gathered around Melchizedek's name and personality as had enveloped the sect called after him. Melchizedek is priest by the grace of God ; and without this grace he would not have obtained the priesthood. But though Philo conceived this priest as a symbol of the highest Logos, he shrinks from representing him as a second God : "For there is but one God in the heavens above, and on the earth beneath ; and there is none beside him." Here, too, there are not lacking unmistakable allusions to the extreme antinomian sects. There are the Ammonites, who abandon the ways of God to wallow in sensuality ; there are also the Moabites—children of intellect who interpret all things rationalistically, seeking to supersede the Almighty, and who were therefore excluded from the congregation of the Lord. Here we have the various types of schismatics, as Philo describes them ; the votaries of sensuality on the one hand, the devotees of intellect on the other. Between the two Philo places Melchizedek—the Logos—as the exalted symbol of orthodoxy. Melchizedek, who harmonizes the earthly and the divine, embodies the true apprehension of God and the right worship of him. And what was the real character of moderate Alexandrian Judaism as formed on this basis ? Philo, its noblest representative and exponent, has discovered its secret. He says, "However deeply we may have penetrated into the allegorical meaning of the Law ; however clearly we may have grasped its higher sense, we are not justified in exclusively fixing our attention upon this higher meaning and rejecting the literal interpretation. We are not absolved from the practice of the prescribed religious ceremonies. The literal sense is like the body ; the occult meaning like the soul. As we take thought for the earthly tabernacle which enshrines the spirit, so must we respect the literal meaning of the Law."

Only a short step brings us to the Alexandrian author of the Epistle to the Hebrews who stands so near to Melchizedekianism, and gives the following sketch of the

spirit of the Alexandrian school. “The law is a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of those things” (Heb. x. 1)<sup>1</sup>. From the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews we learn that the mystery of Melchizedek, as taught by the professors of his cult, was not of recent growth. For he hurls the reproach at his readers that the mission after the order of Melchizedek, which should have long ago been familiar to them, had to be taught them from the beginning. Alluding to the text in the Psalms he says, “Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers<sup>2</sup>, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. v. 10–14). Here it is clearly shown that the cult of Melchizedek, concerning which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews might have said much, and whose teaching he terms the mystery of the “word of righteousness,” flourished before the epistle was written, and traced its origin to a period anterior to the advent of Christianity. As if to leave no doubt as to the intimate connexion between the mystery of Melchizedek and the cult called after his name, the author of the epistle, after prolix statements and homilies, returns to the priest-king and expatiates on the mission entrusted to him by God in the following characteristic fashion: “For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 1 Σκιὰν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. v. 12 καὶ γὰρ ὀφείλοντες εἶναι διδάσκαλοι διὰ τὸν χρόνον.

part of all ; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace ; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life ; but made like unto the Son of God ; abideth a priest continually" (Heb. vii. 1-3). Each of these words proclaims the Melchizedekian. One cannot but feel amazement at the boundless eulogy bestowed upon this cult ; and the question is forced upon one—What place does the author of this epistle assign to Jesus if it be not that accorded him by the favour of this cult, namely, *after* the order of Melchizedek, below that occupied by the priest-king, and nearer that of ordinary men ? Still, at the decisive moment when a return to Jesus seems almost impossible, the writer surprisingly swings round in the brief words, "made like unto the Son of God ; abideth a priest continually" (Heb. vii. 3). Here Melchizedek is degraded to the secondary position of a mere copy. Notwithstanding his greatness he is but a shadow of the true Christ, his incomparably greater successor, whose advent had been predicted in the Psalmist's prophecy which had been fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

With this sudden *volte-face*, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews saves his Christianity, raises the divine Dynamis of the New Testament high above that of the Old, and boldly continues his eulogy of Melchizedek in the following instructive manner (Heb. vii. 3-12): "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life ; but made like unto the Son of God ; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham : but he whose descent is not counted from them received

tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes ; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him. If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron ?” Here the author reaches a decisive point, and at last discovers the supreme secret of the transcendent Melchizedek ; the abrogation of the ancient Law, the proclamation of a new and incomparably superior revelation ; the vanishing of the obsolete and decaying legislation which is but the foreshadowing of good things to come, but not their essence.

Let the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speak for himself (Heb. vii. 12-23): “ For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. . . . And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did ; by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest : (for those priests were made without an oath ; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, the Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec :) by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.”



All these expressions point to the dogma that the Law had, in consequence of Melchizedek's mission, ceased to exist. Their importance lies in the fact that they elucidate the relation of the Melchizedekian sect to the Law, and authoritatively confirm what we already otherwise knew, namely, that the cult of Melchizedek was founded upon antinomian tendencies. For the author of the epistle no more owes his doctrine of Melchizedek's antinomian mission to Christianity than he derived from that creed his Alexandrian exegeses which he treats in so masterly a manner. Thus, too, the author of the Epistle to Barnabas was indebted for his artistic allegories by which he endeavours to crush Mosaism as a carnal system, not to Christianity but to the radical school of the Jewish Diaspora from which they were imported into the faith. The same remark applies to the Alexandrian Jew, Apollos, a missionary to the Greek world, and later on a coadjutor of St. Paul the Apostle (Acts xviii. 24): "An eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures. . . . instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue<sup>1</sup>," i. e. his antinomian Alexandrian Judaism. When Aquila and Priscilla, who had been converted to the Pauline Christianity had heard him, "they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly"; that is, impressed upon him that the Messiah had already appeared. Convinced by their exhortations that the Messianic expectations had been fulfilled in the person of Jesus, "he helped them much which had believed through grace: and mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 24 ff. Ἰουδαῖος δέ τις, Ἀπολλῶς ὀνόματι, Ἀλεξανδρεὺς τῷ γένει, ἀνὴρ λόγιος . . . . δυνατὸς ὢν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς . . . . κατηχημένος τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ Κυρίου, καὶ ζῶν τῷ πνεύματι, ἐλάλει καὶ ἐδίδασκεν ἀκριβῶς τὰ περὶ τοῦ Κυρίου, ἐπιστάμενος μόνον τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου. οὗτος τε ἤρξατο παρρησιάζεσθαι ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ.

Christ<sup>1</sup>.” A striking example of the popularity achieved by the Alexandrian exegeses among the philosophizing heathens is furnished by Justin the Martyr, who handles this system like a master. This facility, and his general knowledge of the Old Testament, he distinctly does not owe to Christianity. He himself tells us that, before his conversion, an old man referred him to the writings of the Jewish prophets, which he studied closely and for which he conceived a great attachment. Thus, after long and futile philosophical labours those gates of light opened to him which are visible to them alone who have received from God and his Christ the gracious gifts of insight and discernment<sup>2</sup>. It is noteworthy that the Melchizedekians did not exhibit so aggressive an hostility to the Law as did the Ophites and Cainites. Melchizedek, the prince of peace, asks that the carnal Law should be gently laid aside, and the spiritual Law be taken up in its place; and this view is held forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Pauline letter and the Epistle to Barnabas are more embittered in their tone. They make a fierce onslaught on Mosaism, demand that the tablets of the Law shall be shattered, and the very fragments ground into dust. This attitude recalls the virulence of Cainite antinomism. Paulinism continually pushes into the foreground the antagonisms between the Old and the New Testament, labours to cut asunder the last links of historic continuity which the Epistle to the Hebrews tries to keep intact.

Just as the conservative wing of the Alexandrian school—that represented by Philo—struggled against the radical tendency, and sought to retain the ceremonial element in the Law, although it had been reduced to a shadow by the discovery of its inner meaning and spirit, so the Epistle to the Hebrews tries to rescue the old tablets from destruc-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 28 . . . . . ἐπιδεικνύς διὰ τῶν γραφῶν εἶναι τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν. This passage of Acts xviii. 24–28, so much treated of and commented on, appears to be, looked at in this light, clear and transparent.

<sup>2</sup> Justin, *Dial. c. Tr.*, c. 8.

tion, though these were already shattered. To the author of the Epistle, the Law is a shadow, but "a shadow of good things to come." It should not be allowed to disappear even when it had achieved its purpose, but should always follow in the wake of the spiritual child it had long borne in its bosom, and of whose divine origin and truth its existence was to be a continual evidence.

The notion of a religion freed from the trammels of ceremonial Law had thus already arisen in the pre-Christian Diaspora, but it needed an authoritative faith based on revelation. Certainly in limited philosophizing circles like the Radicals mentioned in Philo, there existed even a revelation—that of the divine Dynamis, as enunciated by the Ophites, Cainites, Sethites, Melchizedekites, and others. But this revelation had made no headway among the masses. At last even this was brought about in the course of time. The divine Dynamis was incarnated. And the blessed message of a bodily resurrection, sealed by the supreme exemplar, made the doctrine welcome to the sorrow-laden.

Such a message was impossible to the antinomistic Judaism of the Diaspora which taught the immortality of the soul, but denied the resurrection of the body. This, too, explains the failure of the Melchizedekians to popularize their doctrine of the divine Dynamis. Melchizedek was too remote from the masses. Without mother, without father, without descent, without beginning or end, free from human temptations, assuming a human form for a time, enthroned above the angels and heavenly hierarchy, for whom he acts as intercessor with the most high God, Melchizedek was a mediator for philosophers, not for the common herd who clamoured impetuously for salvation. And this explains the passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews which defines the essence and mission of Jesus the true Christ (Heb. ii. 14-17): "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power

of death, that is, the devil. . . . For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." And again (Heb. iv. 15): "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

I conclude this research with the expression of my firm conviction that sooner or later the dogma that Christianity is founded upon Pharisaism will be abandoned; New Testament criticism will then no longer speak of a Jewish Christianity and a "Gentile Christianity founded by Paul," but rather of a conservative Jewish Christianity and a radical Jewish Christianity. That this period is not far off is shown in Schürer's notable essay published in 1897, entitled "The Jews in the Empire of the Bosphorus<sup>1</sup>," and dealing with the inscriptions of the first Christian century, found in *Pantikapaëum* (Kertch) on the Cimmerian Bosphorus, *Gorgipia* (Anapa), east of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, and in Tanais on the extreme frontier of Greek culture, in the north-east corner of the Palus Maeotis. That Judaism had, at the latest in the first century, and probably earlier, taken root here is proved by these inscriptions. "The Jews of the Diaspora," Schürer says in his introduction, "and the Gentile world in which they lived influenced each other in spite of the Hebrew aloofness. The Jews assimilated the Greek language and civilization, and adopted many heathen habits and customs. But they, in their turn, exercised a mighty influence on their Gentile neighbours. Many Jewish communities had a following of *σεβόμενοι τοῦ θεοῦ* who worshipped the true God, rejected idolatry, and in

<sup>1</sup> "Die Juden im bosporanischen Reiche und die Genossenschaften der *σεβόμενοι θεὸν ὑψιστον*." *Sitzungsber. der Königl. Preuss. Akademie der Wissensch. zu Berlin* vom 4. März 1897. Exactly at the same time—on March 5, 1897—my work, *Das Judenthum in der vorchristl. griechischen Welt*, went to press.

part accepted the Jewish Law. Interesting illustrations are furnished by the Greek inscriptions from the Bosphorus, of which Lasyscher has published the completed edition. They show, on the one hand, that the Jews even imitated some of the Greek legal institutions; and on the other, that there were certain religious communities who cannot be regarded as Jewish, but nevertheless betray a distinctly Jewish influence by the manner in which they speak of themselves and of the God they worship."

After treating of other inscriptions Schürer continues: "these inscriptions prove the existence and influence of Jewish communities in the Byzantine Empire during the first centuries after Christ. Such an influence can most probably be traced in the religious community mentioned in the following inscription: Worshippers of the most high God who have now been received in the communion." They honour the Deity by erecting a stone tablet on which their names were inscribed.

Schürer thus sums up his conclusion: "The peculiar religious bodies in Tanais are the fruit of a Jewish propaganda in that remote region. The founders of these communities derived from their Jewish teachers the knowledge of the most high God, whose name is ineffable, and beside whom there are no other gods. But they mingled with this Hebrew Monotheism elements of the Greek Zeus idea which in its way also pointed to Monotheism. This conclusion is completely confirmed by our knowledge of similar organizations of later date, namely, the Hypsistarians and kindred communities mentioned in the Patristic literature of the fourth and fifth centuries. The Hypsistarians lived in Cappadocia, in the fourth century; they worshipped the Almighty, rejecting images and sacrifices, but nevertheless paid some reverence to Fire and Light. They rejected circumcision, but observed the Jewish Sabbath and certain Dietary Laws."

Adducing further proofs for his theory, Schürer continues: "These hypotheses enable us to understand how religious

communities who exclusively worshipped *θεὸς ὕψιστος* could grow up in Tanais under Jewish influence. The religion of this brotherhood was neither Judaism nor Paganism, but a combination of both. From their Jewish teachers they learned *σέβεσθαι θεὸν ὕψιστον*. But maintaining a separate organization rather than joining the Jewish community in a secondary rank, as other adherents had done, they admitted or retained Greek elements.” The utmost interest attaches to Schürer’s final conclusion which shatters the view, hitherto in vogue, that Paul was the author of Gentile Christianity emancipated from the Law; for the existence is admitted of antinomian Judaizing communities in the pre-Christian Greek era.

Schürer’s conclusion is as follows: “Certain indications point to the fact that the formation of antinomian Gentile-Christian communities was not exclusively due to Paul. The process in many places, i. e. at Rome, seems to have been favoured by the sympathy with which the Sermon on the Mount was received amongst the *σεβόμενοι τοῦ θεοῦ*. As those who had accepted only certain elements of Judaism severed their connexion with Jewish communities and formed independent organizations, it was easy for them entirely to repudiate the Law. And this is exactly the history of the Greek religious communities in Tanais. Just as these sprang from the *σεβόμενοι τοῦ θεοῦ* and became something distinct, so, by an analogous process, they in their turn gave birth to Christian communities.”

I welcome with much satisfaction this long expelled but at length dawning recognition of the truth. It is of great promise for the elucidation of the history of the pre-Christian Jewish Diaspora and the rise of Christianity. A few more such valuable excavations and the light of the noon day will have arrived: *Saxa loquuntur!*

*Vienna.*

M. FRIEDLÄNDER.

Stimulated by Schürer’s essay, Cumont published a pamphlet on the same subject, entitled “*Hypsistos*” (*Supplément à la Revue de l’instruction*

*publique en Belgique*, 1897, 15). Cumont not only unconditionally accepts Schürer's theory, but goes beyond him in asserting the Jewish influence upon Asia Minor which notoriously had, at the time of Jesus, a numerous Jewish population. He quotes several votive inscriptions, unnoticed by Schürer ; and all referring to the *θεὸς ὑψιστος* ; and adds : "... combien ces milieux, tout pénétrés d'idées bibliques sans être étroitement attachés à la loi judaïque, constituaient un terrain fécond pour la prédication chrétienne, et l'on s'explique mieux, en tenant compte de cette situation, que la foi nouvelle ait opéré plus de conversions en Asie Mineure que dans toute autre région " (p. 8).